



City careers on the move: Occupations in urban transportation

Patricia Tate | January 2022

For many people, traveling to and from destinations in urban areas—cities, towns, and suburbs—is vital to their daily routines. To get where they need to go, these people rely on workers who drive and maintain buses, taxis, trains, and other modes of urban transportation.

In 2020, there were about 1.9 million workers in selected occupations that involve helping people get into, around in, and out of cities, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The rate of projected employment growth in these occupations varies. But overall, they are expected to have more than 240,000 openings, on average, each year from 2020 to 2030. (These data include all employment and openings for the occupations wherever they are located, not just in urban transportation.)

Keep reading to learn more about some of the occupations related to urban transportation.

Occupations on the go

Urban transportation includes both publicly subsidized and privately owned options. Some workers drive the vehicles that safely move people to, from, and within cities. Others maintain and repair the equipment that keeps everything and everyone going.

Drivers and operators. Whether they see passengers only from a distance or greet them directly, drivers and operators are on the front lines of urban transportation.

- [Locomotive engineers](#) drive intercity and commuter trains that carry passengers into and out of cities from surrounding areas.
- [Passenger vehicle drivers](#) pick up passengers in taxicabs, limousines, private vehicles, shuttles, vans, and buses. Some of these drivers take passengers to a requested destination. Others travel along designated routes, such as on fixed schedules with frequent stops, from a hotel to the airport, or for sightseeing tours.
- [Subway and streetcar operators](#) drive one of two types of passenger-rail vehicles: trains that do not have separate locomotives and run on elevated and underground tracks or trolleys powered by electricity that run on tracks along urban streets.

Mechanics and repairers. Although these workers rarely interact with passengers, mechanics and repairers are essential to keeping vehicles in motion. These occupations are involved in urban transportation in the following ways:

- [Automotive service technicians and mechanics](#) inspect, maintain, and repair passenger vehicles, including cars, taxicabs, and vans.
- [Bicycle repairers](#) and [motorcycle mechanics](#) maintain and fix popular two-wheeled options—such as bicycles, scooters, and mopeds—that serve as alternatives to full-sized vehicles.
- [Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists](#) check, repair, and overhaul vehicles that have diesel engines.
- [Rail car repairers](#) service railroad locomotives, subway cars, and other rolling stock.

Employment, outlook, and wages

As noted previously, BLS data in this article are for the occupations wherever they are located, not just for the segments that are concentrated in urban transportation. But some occupations, such as subway and streetcar operators, are only in metropolitan areas; for those occupations, therefore, data are specific to urban transportation.

Employment. Table 1 shows that passenger vehicle drivers except transit and intercity bus drivers accounted for the largest number of jobs in these occupations in 2020. Close behind was the occupation of automotive service technicians and mechanics.

Table 1. Employment, outlook, and wages in selected occupations related to urban transportation



Occupation	Employment, 2020	Employment change, projected 2020–30	
		Number	Percent
Passenger vehicle drivers, except bus drivers, transit and intercity	707,400	180,600	26
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	703,800	2,100	0.3
Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists	275,400	21,400	8
Bus drivers, transit and intercity	165,200	34,800	21
Locomotive engineers	26,500	1,500	6
Rail car repairers	21,100	1,100	5
Motorcycle mechanics	14,000	1,400	10
Bicycle repairers	12,100	400	4
Subway and streetcar operators	11,000	1,100	10

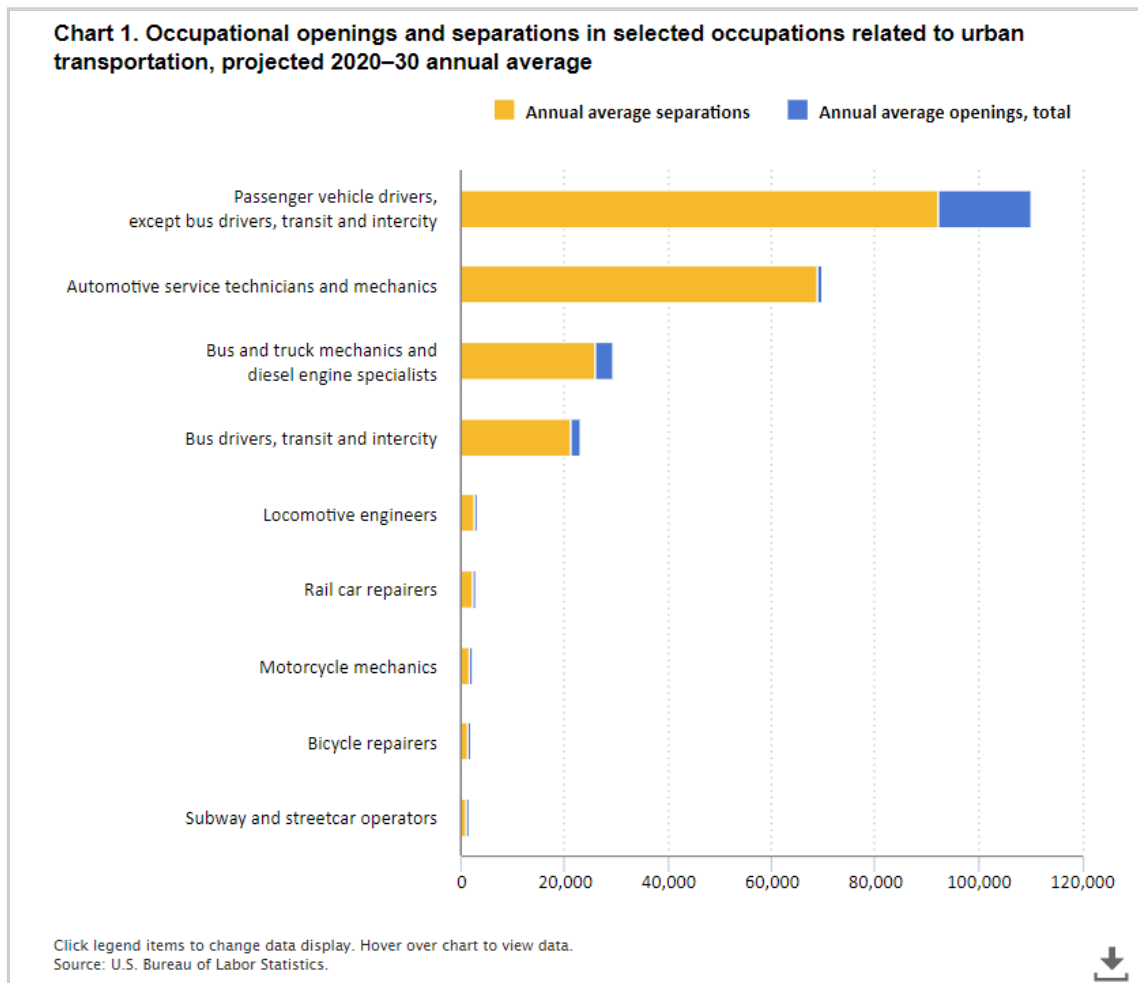
Note: Data are for all workers in the occupations, not just those in urban transportation. Totals may differ from individual calculations due to rounding.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program.

Outlook. From 2020 to 2030, employment in these occupations is projected to grow about 13 percent, faster than the 8-percent average for all occupations. The occupation of passenger vehicle drivers except transit and intercity bus drivers is projected to have both the fastest employment growth (26 percent) and to add the most jobs (180,600) of all the occupations in the table. BLS expects employment growth for these passenger vehicle drivers to come, in large part, from demand for ride-hailing services that complement public transportation systems in urban areas.

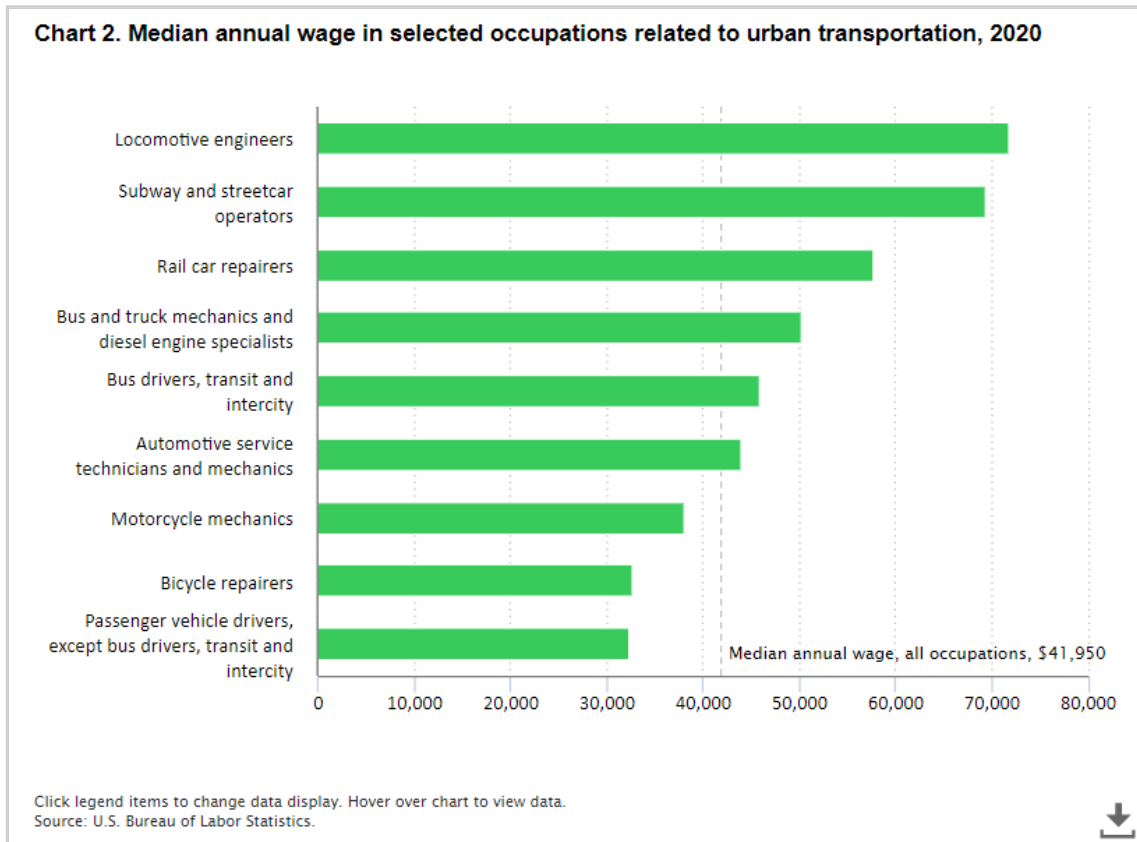
In addition, BLS expects that much of the projected employment growth for some occupations is likely to occur early in the 2020–30 decade. The early growth in these occupations will result from recovery from the COVID-19 recession that began in 2020. Among the occupations related to urban transportation that may be affected are locomotive engineers, motorcycle mechanics, and passenger vehicle drivers.

Table 1 also shows that projected fast employment growth may not mean many new jobs in some occupations. For example, average growth is projected for employment of subway and streetcar operators (10 percent); however, this occupation is projected to add fewer jobs over the decade than is automotive service technicians and mechanics, which is expected to have little to no change in employment (less than 1 percent growth). This is because there are fewer subway and streetcar operators to begin with than there are automotive service technicians and mechanics.

New jobs resulting from projected employment growth are a source of occupational openings, but they're not the only one. Workers who permanently leave an occupation—either to transfer to another or to exit the labor force, such as to retire—also create opportunities. As chart 1 shows, most of the projected annual openings in transportation-related occupations stem from the need to replace those separations.



Wages. Six of the 9 occupations related to urban transportation shown in chart 2 had median annual wages that were higher than the median wage for all occupations in 2020 (\$41,950). Locomotive engineers (\$71,870), subway and streetcar operators (\$69,440), and rail car repairers (\$57,710) had the highest wages of occupations in chart 2. However, table 1 and chart 1 also show that these occupations were among the smallest in employment and have the fewest projected openings, on average, of the ones presented.



The wage estimates include wage and salary workers only and do not include the self-employed. Wages for self-employed workers may vary from those shown in chart 2; that's especially relevant for occupations in which the rate of self-employment is higher than that for all workers (6 percent), such as passenger vehicle drivers except transit and intercity bus drivers (18 percent).

Training for transportation

BLS also provides information about the education and experience that workers typically need to enter an occupation, along with the training required to attain competency in it. And, as table 2 shows, applicants can enter all of these selected occupations with either a high school diploma or a postsecondary nondegree award.

Table 2. Entry-level education and training typically required in selected occupations related to urban transportation¹



Occupation	Education	On-the-job training ²
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term
Bicycle repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term
Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term
Bus drivers, transit and intercity	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term
Locomotive engineers ³	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term
Motorcycle mechanics	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term
Rail car repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term
Subway and streetcar operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term
Passenger vehicle drivers, except bus drivers, transit and intercity ⁴	No formal educational credential	Short-term

[1] Typical requirements are for all workers in the occupations, not just those in urban transportation.

[2] On-the-job training indicates the training typically needed to attain competency in the occupation. Short-term on-the-job training lasts for 1 month or less; moderate-term for more than 1 month, up to 12 months; and long-term for more than 12 months.

[3] To enter this occupation, workers typically need less than 5 years of experience in a related occupation. All other occupations shown typically require no experience at the entry level.

[4] Includes school bus drivers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program.

Of the occupations shown in table 2, only locomotive engineers typically need experience in a related occupation, along with a diploma, to enter the occupation: these workers usually start out in another rail transportation occupation, such as railroad conductors or yardmasters. All of the occupations typically require on-the-job training to attain competency.

For more info

Explore the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) (OOH) for detailed information about the job duties, typical education requirements, wages, and more for the occupations highlighted in this article—and for hundreds of others.

Projections data are available from the BLS [Employment Projections](#) program. Wage data are from the BLS [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics](#) (OEWS) program.

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